

MESOPOTAMIAN MINUTE

- Current News on Agriculture & USDA in Iraq -

Office of Agricultural Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Baghdad

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Kirkuk PRT – Kirkuk Veterinary and Business Training – PRT Kirkuk received a QRF grant to do three weeks of training with the veterinarians belonging to the Veterinary Syndicate. The Baghdad Veterinary Syndicate is regulated under the Ministry of Agriculture in Baghdad and registered with the Ministry of Planning and Tracking. The training targeted unemployed veterinarians (meaning they are not practicing veterinary medicine or employed by the State Veterinary Company) and consisted of 1 week of business training, 1 week of livestock production review and class work and 1 week of teaching the veterinarians about artificial insemination and estrous synchronization.



Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture’s Agricultural Exposition – USDA’s Agricultural Economist, John M. Schnittker and Cultural Advisor, Ali Alansari recently attended the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture’s Agricultural Exposition at the Baghdad Fairgrounds, not far from USDA’s offices in the Green Zone. Mr. Schnittker used the occasion to discuss recent tenders issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, and pointed out the inherent quality and competitive pricing of US agricultural machinery, irrigation equipment, and commodities.



Olive Presses delivered to Salah ad Din Province – The PRT brought a new food processing technology to Salah ad Din Province to begin to build an olive oil industry there. The PRT’s AgAdvisor, Tom Pick, worked with a number of partners on a plan to demonstrate quality olive oil production. Three of the Italian made systems that can process 80 kilograms of olives per hour (yields about 25 liters oil per hour at standard conversion rates) were delivered to the Ag Directorate offices where the bulk of the olives are growing. The CERP provided funding for the presses while the Ag Directorate offered management, maintenance, utilities, and space for the systems, each of which consists of a washing apparatus, a self-contained press device, and filter.



USDA Baghdad Meets Iraq Ag Committee MPs– Ag Counselor Ron Verdonk and staff met with the Iraqi Parliament’s Agriculture Committee members to provide the USG’s assessment of Iraqi agriculture, talk about some of the USDA initiatives in Iraqi agriculture and provided recommendations for GoI action. The USDA delegation’s views were well received, with some MPs asking USDA to provide additional, specific policy recommendations that would lead to improved agricultural production. The MPs asked for a follow up meeting that will be scheduled for early May.

Personnel Update - There are currently 27 USDA personnel in Iraq including those with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), at Embassy Baghdad or embedded with U.S. military units. Since the last *Minute*, we have bid farewell to PRT Advisors Bob Glasgow, Wendy Flatt who did outstanding work in Babel and Kirkuk respectively

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